

tion of woman, the establishment of benevolent systems, the education of the masses, the absolute divorcement of church and state, the promulgation of the principles of civil and religious liberty, Christianity in its refining and ameliorating power has been at work. The influence of the system must be considered as a whole, and not in parts, as where its purifying power has been rendered abortive by narrow sect influence or misguided impulse. If we stop to consider sectarian creed and dogma, and the persecutions that grew out the mistaken notion that ritual was religion and sect was Christ, much will be found to condemn and little to condone.

The burning of Servetus by John Calvin, the persecution of the Quakers by the Puritans, the drowning of witches by protestants, the martyrdom of "heretics" by Catholics, and the terror of the French Revolution, are all read on the same page of human savagery, spite of the spirit of Christ, or of Reason. These were lapses into primordial moral conditions, as fever patients experience backsets and periods of weakness in the first stages of convalescence, or as festers appear on the hands when the general system is traveling upward to health. If, on the other hand, you remember that whatever of ancient literature and art we possess was preserved by the Catholic church; that the papacy has stood for centuries as a bulwark against the traffic in human flesh; that Burk and O'Connell stood for a patriotism and freedom as broad as the human race; that Lord Baltimore measured up, side by side, with Roger Williams for religious freedom and political equality in America; and that Father Mathew is the almost founder of the great temperance movement that is shaking the four corners of the earth, you will understand that the all-abounding spirit of God's Son works with all sects and all people for the good of man. The spirit of equality that pervades Gospel teachings, inspiring the declaration that "God hath of one blood created all nations," is one and the same with that which, seventeen hundred years later, guaranteed to every man, through the American constitution, the rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Every inch of the pathway to liberty

has been baptized in human blood. Every step has been blocked with despotism and bigotry, with dungeons and chains; and now, at last, on American soil—on a continent held free from the savagery of mediæval conflict—liberty truth, justice, humanity, stands face to face with the sun. That man should no longer be imprisoned for an idea, nor martyred for an opinion, Providence saw to it that the breadth of the constitution, as it relates to conscience, should know no bounds. He is in it, and in the government, not in the simple narrowness of name, but in the immeasurable fullness and richness of spirit. The civil liberty guaranteed, the religious freedom vouched safe, have alone rendered the Republic invulnerable to foes from without.

Whatever of danger threatens comes from within—comes from one class of citizens arrogating to themselves alone prerogatives and privileges guaranteed by the very genius of our institutions to every other, share and share alike. Political parties, dividing along the line of the industrial, economic, health, taxation, civil, and even moral and education measures, have the right of contention and discussion, on the basis that all men are equal before the law. It was a new idea in founding the republic that a man's religious belief should not enter into the questions of eligibility to full rights of citizenship. Protestants, Catholics, sceptics, alike, have fought side by side for American freedom and American honor. Side by side with Grant and Sherman and Howard and Hooker and Garfield and Logan are written the names of Mead, and Meagher, of Rosecrans and Carroll, of Shields and Sheridan, and no man who loves his country can say that one of them ever flinched when American freedom was at stake; or that he found in his religious dicta that which menaced, in the slightest degree, his loyalty to the stars and stripes. If he did, he proved more of an American than a partisan, and threw dogma to the winds for the honor of his home.

Now, I am vested with certain rights as a citizen. There are: liberty of conscience—to believe and worship as conscience dictates—to hold property, to engage in peaceful pursuits, to exercise the right of franchise—to vote,

hold office—to obey and maintain the law. All this is mine as a citizen. As a Protestant, a Catholic, a Spiritualist, a Materialist, the constitution and government take no account of me whatever. That is a matter that belongs to the realm of conscience into the sacred precincts of which they never enter. When I come up to take the oath of office as a legislator, a judiciary or an executive, I do not take it as a religionist but as an American. I do not take it to defend one class but all on an equal plain in their vested rights, each of whom is equal before the law.

This thing of crowding men out of their constitutional rights because of denominational adherence or ecclesiastical coloring comes from the bigotry and narrowness of the past. As a Protestant, I have rights in this country equal with Catholics, and no more. They have rights equal with me, and no more. Any position a Catholic or Protestant may seek to obtain or hold as an American, supporting the constitution, is his right, regardless of the place he worships. But if a Protestant or a Catholic seeks position as such, with a clear purpose of denying the other equal privileges with himself, he ought to obtain it. If a Baptist, a Methodist, a Unitarian enter the political field with the avowed purpose of swinging legislative machinery in the interest of his own class as arrayed against the rights of every other, I would work and vote against him as an enemy of his age, his country and his kind. And I would do the same with a Catholic, circumstances the same. If he, with his people, determined to establish private schools for the education of their children at their own expense, I would recognize that right. But if, in doing so, they denied me the privilege of educating my children where I pleased, and sought by open or insidious methods to undermine or uproot our public school system, I would strike back, and in the most effective constitutional way in the limits of power. I would do the same with Catholics, circumstances being the same.

Were I a member of the board of public instructions, it would never occur to me to ask a candidate for position as a teacher, are you an Episco-